MARVEL COMICS
CAT TRAP
PT 1 OF 2
DEAD-POOL
#44
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PRIEST
CALAFIORE
HOLDREDGE
GUEST-STARRING
BLACK PANTHER
AND THE
AVENGERS
DIRECT EDITION
04411
$2.25 US $3.50 CAN

The story thus far:

Although KING T'CHALLA of Wakanda, my CLIENT, was finally out of his COMA, he was still too WEAK to move about on his own. Dr. Tambak confined him to a zero-G transport, which the client immediately took down into the TECHNO-JUNGLE.

A Stanley Kubrick-James Cameron NIGHTMARE, the Techno-Jungle was an eerie shadow world, a city beneath the city of Central Wakanda. An impossible MAZE jammed with tangles of fiber optic cabling and high-tech devices.

Very few people were AUTHORIZED to be down there (least of all me -- EVERETT K. ROSS, U.S. State Department schlub). Any poor slob dumb enough to find his way down there could wander, lost, for WEEKS before dying of dehydration.

There was NO LIGHT. No SKY to navigate by. No "You are HERE" arrow signs posted. There was only a jigsaw of interlocking tunnels that had no rhyme or reason to most anyone but the king himself--

--which fairly MIRRORED my client's personality.

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THE KING AND I

Until the recent COLLAPSE of the Wakandan economy, he was one of the world's RICHEST and most technologically proficient men. Bill Gates meets Shaka Zulu.
He was KING of one of the most technologically advanced countries in the WORLD. I'd known him for quite a while now, but the man was still a MYSTERY to me.
He was, ultimately, a bit UNKNOWABLE. Compassionate eyes that told you absolutely NOTHING about what he was thinking.
He did most everything for his own reasons. Like the jungle cats his religion deified, he was a CUNNING man, always three steps ahead of his enemies.
Which, I supposed, was why he was THERE.
An informed GUESS was the best anyone could ever do. It was possible, given his humiliating LOSS of Killmonger's TRIBAL CHALLENGE--
--that the client had gone to the Techno-Jungle for some PRIVACY. It may have been the tribal equivalent of hiding under the BED.
In an effort to THWART Erik Killmonger's challenge, the client had DISSOLVED his political government and CRASHED the Wakandan economy.
The rule of LAW thus became TRIBAL over POLITICAL. And, while the client was still KING, his loss of Killmonger's challenge STRIPPED him of his most IMPORTANT role--
--that of CHIEFTAIN.
King T'Challa of Wakanda was NO LONGER The Black Panther...
...thanks, largely, to ME...
His NEXT move was ANYBODY's guess...
ENTER, MY LORD!
TAKU-- MY MOST LOYAL FRIEND AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION--
ALL OF WHICH FAIRLY SUMS UP THE CURRENT EVENTS IN BLACK PANTHER #18-22. --MIKE

--HAVE YOU FOUND HER YET?
NO SIGN OF HER, MY LORD.
THIS MAY BE A HOAX-- A MISDIRECTION ON KILLMONGER'S PART.
Malice
I DOUBT IT.
BROTHER VOODOO WAS ALMOST FATALLY WOUNDED-- HIS THROAT CUT BY AN UNSEEN ASSAILANT--
--WHO TOLD VOODOO HER NAME--
--MALICE, KILLMONGER'S PROTÉGÉ.
A DEADLY, MANIACAL, GENETICALLY-ENHANCED WOMAN WITH VAST STRENGTH AND UNERRING ACCURACY.
IT STANDS TO REASON: IF KILLMONGER HAS RETURNED FROM THE GRAVE-- SO HAS SHE.
NONE OF THE MANSION'S INTERNAL SENSORS HAVE PICKED UP ANYONE MATCHING MALICE'S DESCRIPTION, MY LORD.
VOODOO DID NOT SEE HER, BUT ONLY HEARD HER WHISPER HER NAME AS SHE VANISHED.
KILLMONGER RETURNED FROM THE GRAVE RADICALLY CHANGED, TAKU. IT IS POSSIBLE MALICE IS AMONG US--
--AND WE DO NOT HAVE A CLUE AS TO WHO OR EVEN WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR.
ALSO, N'JADAKA IS AT AVENGERS MANSION. IRON MAN CONTINUES TO CALL-- WHAT SHOULD I TELL HIM--?
NOTHING.
THE MAN HE IS CALLING FOR NO LONGER EXISTS...

SHROUDED IN STOLEN IDENTITIES AND CLANDESTINE SECRETS, THE MERC-WITH-A-MOUTH IS A MAN OF MYSTERY. HERO? VILLAIN? SOCIOPATH? DEADPOOL MAKES HIS OWN RULES AND PLAYS BY NOBODY'S GAME. HE IS AN AGENT OF CHAOS CONFINED TO A WORLD OF CONSTRICTING ORDER; BLASTING DOWN THE FOURTH WALL BRICK BY BRICK! STAN LEE PRESENTS:
DEADPOOL
CAT TRAP
(Or: "Wakanda Mere Are You?")
The OTHER half of this story began in a secret luxury condo built under Soho.
A place most anybody BUT the cops could find, especially if they were looking for...
DEAD-POOL
ALL RIGHT...
...NOBODY MOVE OR THE PUPPET GETS IT!
By:
STORYTELLERS
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Jon Holdredge
INKING
Chris Eliopoulos
LETTERING
Shannon Blanchard
COLORIST
Mike Marts
EDITOR
Bob Harras
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

THE USUAL

Not much is known about the mercenary named DEADPOOL, but what little IS known will make your HEAD explode.
Here's my BEST shot at it:
END OF THE LINE, RAT-BOY.
ALAS! AND WOE IS ME! DAKI IS UNDONE!
Deadpool was once a top-flight mercenary named Wade Wilson who volunteered for Canada's WEAPON X program in hope of finding a cure for his CANCER.
GET REAL, BUG-FACE! I'M THE BRAINS OF THIS OUTFIT!
What he GOT was an advanced, rapid HEALING FACTOR--
--and peeling, deformed skin that looked a lot like the Mole Man in a thong.
YOU AND ME ARE GONNA DO GREAT THINGS TOGETHER, WADE! BUT, FIRST--
What little I could find on Deadpool lists him as certifiably INSANE--
--which made him a perfect match for his new client--
--WE NEED TO DO A LITTLE HOUSE-CLEANING...
I TRUST YOU'RE ENJOYING YOURSELF, MR. WILSON!
DAKI CAN BE... MOST ENTERTAINING! HOWEVER, YOU DO REALIZE--
The Reverend Michael Ibn al-hajj Achebe once chased a man 8 miles across the desert just because the guy had sold his wife a pair of SHOES.
A KOOK of the FIRST order, Achebe once took over Wakanda by coup de etat and then FLED the country after the Black Panther returned.
No one had seen him OR his hand puppet in MONTHS.
CHOCO-QUICK
BLACK PANTHER #12 - MIKE

--DAKI IS MERELY A HAND PUPPET, YES--?
YOU WERE THREATENING YOUR OWN HAND. A COMMON MISTAKE.
I USE POST-IT NOTES TO REMIND MYSELF...
YEAH, WHATEVER.
WHAT DO YOU WANT--?!
PEACE... LONG LIFE... HAPPINESS...
...JUSTICE FOR DIALO... TYRA BANKS' PHONE NUMBER...
...THE USUAL.
HAHA
PSYCHO!
"ACHEBE"...
... I REMEMBER READING SOMETHING ABOUT THIS GUY. HE TOOK OVER THE BLACK PANTHER'S KINGDOM...
WHICH, WHAT, MEANS WE SHOULDN'T KILL HIM?! THIS IS OUR HOUSE-- THREE FIERCE VILLAINS--
--WELL, TWO AND A HALF--
--AND, SO FAR, EVERY TOM, DICK, AND ACHEBE JUST SEEM TO WANDER IN HERE WHENEVER THEY WANT TO--!!
GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON WHY I SHOULDN'T RACK THIS GUY?!?
I'LL GIVE YOU 15 REASONS, MY CONSTRICTIVE FRIEND--!
--THE 11 DIGIT ACCOUNT NUMBER TO DEADPOOL'S SECRET SLUSH FUND WHERE HE'S DEPOSITED OVER $1.4 MILLION IN JUST THE LAST FEW WEEKS--
KA-BAASSSH!!
--THE ADVANCED TOXINS I LACED THE MILK WITH--

--AND, LASTLY, WHAT'S BEHIND DOOR NUMBER THREE!
BY NOW, YOU MUST CERTAINLY REALIZE TITANIA HAS A LITTLE SECRET.
IF YOU KILL ME, I PROBABLY WON'T TELL YOU WHAT IT IS!
BY THE WAY...
...IS THAT POLO YOU'RE WEARING ...?
WHO, PRECISELY, DO YOU WANT OFFED?
"OFFED"?
BURNT. STUCK. SMACKED. DROPPED. IMPEACHED.
CONGRESSIONALLY INVESTIGATED.
AH--! NO, NO-- I AM MISUNDERSTOOD!
I WISH TO HIRE YOU FOR A RECOVERY MISSION--
THIS IS LIKATANA-- MY BELOVED PET!
A RARE, SPOTTED LEOPARD. SHE WAS STOLEN FROM OUR MODEST HOME SOME WEEKS AGO AND BROUGHT TO YOUR COUNTRY FOR SALE!
I WILL PAY ANY PRICE FOR HER SAFE RETURN--!
WHAT SECRET?!?
WHAT TOXIN?!
IT'S MY HAIR. ISN'T IT?! MY GOD, MY HAIR IS GOING TO FALL OUT--!!
DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU MEAN BY "ANY PRICE", WE MIGHT HAVE A DEAL.
I AM ECSTATIC.
IF THIS IS A SET-UP-- AND I'M CERTAIN IT IS-- YOU'RE A DEAD MAN.
I'VE BEEN DEAD BEFORE. I GOT OVER IT.
OH, AND ONE FINAL THING--
--CAN I KEEP THIS?

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST GAUDILY-DRESSED FASCISTS

Of COURSE it was a set-up.
The leopard's name wasn't Ukatana-- It was PREYY. And he didn't belong to Achebe, but to a VERY scary guy named Erik KILLMONGER--
--current CHIEFTAIN of the Wakandan PANTHER CLAN. A rank that entitled him to call himself--
BLACK PANTHER
AMAZING-- A GUY COULD GET TO LIKE THIS!
KillPanther was spinning his wheels on the south lawn of AVENGERS MANSION, while the team tried to figure out if they should ARREST him--
--or offer him TEA.
The guy with him was Delroy Garrett, Jr., but he called himself TRIATHLON. He claims the teachings of the TRIUNE UNDERSTANDING unlocked his "triple powers"--
--making him THREE TIMES as capable as the best possible human standard.
SO-- PREYY IS COMPLETELY DOMESTICATED--?
AFTER A FASHION--
No, I don't know what that means, either...
--NOT SO DOMESTICATED AS SOCIALIZED, I SUPPOSE. LET'S JUST SAY PREYY AND I HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING.
I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY WITH YOU AVENGERS.
WELL-- NOT TO PUT TOO FINE A POINT ON IT, PANTHER--
CALL ME ERIK.
--OKAY, ERIK--
--BUT YOU ARE, TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, A VILLAIN.
WHICH IS STUPID. I'VE NEVER HARMED ANYONE OUTSIDE OF A LEGITIMATE TRIBAL CONFLICT.
AND THAT'S WHY YOU AREN'T IN RESTRAINTS RIGHT NOW. IT'S LIKE, OKAY, YOU'RE A VILLAIN--
--BUT ARE YOU BLACK PANTHER'S VILLAIN OR EVERYONE'S VILLAIN?

ANTHONY STARK
--WELL, THAT'S THE QUESTION, NOW, ISN'T IT?
I MEAN, MEMBERSHIP SHOULD CERTAINLY BE OUT-- WE VOTED IN A PERSON, NOT THE OFFICE OF BLACK PANTHER--
--BUT, SHOULD WE LOCK THIS GUY UP?
THE STATE DEPARTMENT CONFIRMS T'CHALLA LOST A TRIBAL CHALLENGE TO THIS GUY. IF THE PANTHER DIDN'T ARREST KILLMONGER--
--YES-- WHY SHOULD WE? I SEE YOUR POINT, IRON MAN. STILL--
--ERIK KILLMONGER HAS BEEN IMPLICATED IN ONE OR TWO OTHER CRIMES--
I KNOW, GOLIATH. I'VE FOUGHT AGAINST HIM BEFORE... BUT THERE'S NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE. THE MAN HAS BEEN DEAD, SO OFTEN, MAKING A CASE AGAINST HIM IS PROBABLY NOT POSSIBLE.
SO, WHAT, WE JUST LET HIM PLAY FRISBEE--?
WHY NOT, WASP? AT LEAST WE KNOW WHERE HE IS.
STILL NO WORD FROM PANTHER--?
NOTHING'S GOTTEN THROUGH SINCE HE DISSOLVED HIS GOVERNMENT. IF IT WERE ANYONE ELSE, I'D GUESS THIS WAS A MAJOR COMMUNICATIONS FAILURE--
--BUT, WHO THE BLAZES KNOWS WHAT T'CHALLA IS UP TO THESE DAYS? ONLY THING I'M CERTAIN OF IS --
-- TO PROTECT OUR SECURITY INTERESTS, I'VE ACQUIRED ALL THE OUTSTANDING SHARES OF WAKANDA DESIGN GROUP-- THE FIRM THAT PROVIDES OUR QUINJETS AND OTHER TOOLS.
I'D SELL THEM ALL TO T'CHALLA-- IF I COULD GET AHOLD OF HIM.
SO, WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS--
--WE'RE ON OUR OWN WITH KILLMONGER.
I SUPPOSE WE COULD TURN HIM OVER TO THE I.N.S.-- DOES TRIBAL CHIEFTAIN COUNT AS A HEAD OF STATE--?
PERHAPS THE REAL QUESTION SHOULD BE--
U.S. - IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE - I.N.S.
--WHY ARE WE TRYING SO HARD? IS IT REALLY THAT IMPORTANT FOR US TO MAKE AN ENEMY OF THIS GUY?
THE WORST THING HE'S DONE IS LET HIS LEOPARD MAKE A MESS ON THE LAWN. I CAN LIVE WITH THAT.
LET KILLMONGER PLAY HIS HAND. SOONER THAN LATER, WE'LL KNOW--

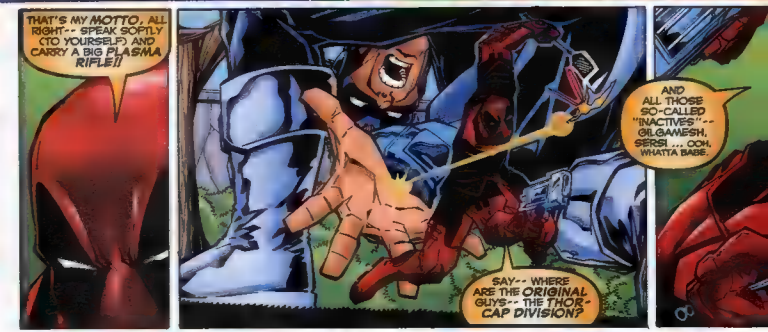
"--WHAT KILLMONGER IS REALLY ALL ABOUT."
--?! CAN I HELP YOU?
ANIMAL CONTROL, MS. SHE-HULK.
Gov't Pet Perso
WE GOT A REPORT ABOUT A WILD LEOPARD!?
SAY... AREN'T YOU THOM CRUZ?
SOMETIMES...
THE LEOPARD LOOKS HARMLESS ...
THEY ALL DO, MS. WALTERS, BEFORE THEY BITE YOUR BAZOOMBAHS OFF. YOU'RE A LAWYER, RIGHT?
YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T KEEP UNAUTHORIZED LEOPARDS OR, SAY, MASKED GOATS, INSIDE CITY LIMITS.
C'MERE, FELLA. NICE KITTY.
COME GET A SCOOBY SNACK...
WHAT THE BLAZES IS THIS--?
LOOK, ERIK, I'M SURE IT'S JUST ROUTINE--
THE ANSWER TO YOUR FIRST QUESTION IS $HADDUP.
MY LEOPARD IS PART OF MY DIPLOMATIC POUCH-- HE IS EXEMPT FROM--
ERIK-- AS LONG AS THE ANIMAL IS DISEASE-FREE, I'M SURE EVERYTHING WILL--
GGRRWWLL!
...Uh...
...WHAT'D I DO--?!?
GGRRWWLL!
PREBY-- COME BACK HERE--!!
--?!? PREBY--!!
...I'M BETTING THIS IS NOT GOOD...
SSSZZAAACCKK!!

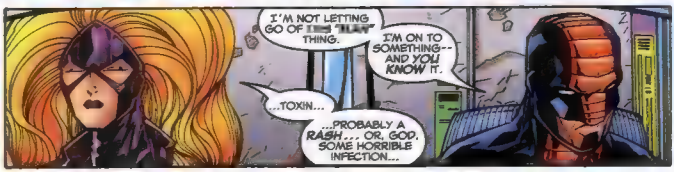
ALL RIGHT--
HOLY CRUD!!
THE LEOPARD JUST VANISHED!!
MY GOD, WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?!? SAVE ME!!!

HE'S RIGHT. YOU KNOW. YOU DO HAVE A SECRET.
EXACTLY WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, LADY?
IF YOU [redacted] TRYING TO [redacted] DEADPOOL, YOU'RE WAY TOO LATE.
THE WAY YOU [redacted] FROM YOUR HUSBAND-- THE ABSORBING MAN-- THE OTHER DAY. & AND WHY DOES HE THINK YOU'RE HOME IN BED--?
THE MAN'S NUTS. IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED.
I MEAN. HE PRANK FROM THE MILK CARTON.
...TOXIN... IN THE MILK...
...HE'S BLUFFING.
A BLUFF. GOTTA BE.
WHAT SECRET ARE YOU KEEPING FROM US?
ARE YOU A MAN?
...PROBABLY END UP HURLING ALL NIGHT...
...GROW HAIR ON MY BACK...
LAST ISSUE -SECRET MIKE
SILENCE!
MUST YOU TWO PRATTLE ENDLESSLY ABOUT NOTHING?!?
HEY-- WE'RE VILLAINS. IT'S WHAT WE DO.
WELL, LEST YE FORGET-- THIS IS MY OPERATION! I REQUIRE QUIET SO I MAY CONCENTRATE--
--IF I AM TO ADVANCE MY PLAN!
AND WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT YOUR "PLAN". WHATEVER IT IS?
THE BANK CODES. REMEMBER?
TAKING DEADPOOL'S MONEY HAS TO BE AT LEAST AS MUCH FUN AS KILLING HIM.
GOOD POINT.
NAH. STILL WANT HIM DEAD. IT'S A CLOSE SECOND, THOUGH...
ARE YOU A MAN?
QUIET. OR THE DEAL'S OFF!
NOW... WHERE'S THAT DIGITAL IMAGER?
MR. SARDINE

STILL NOTHING FROM WAKANDA, LEWIS?
CHANNEL'S OPEN MR. STARK... NOTHING!
FINE. LET'S CALL IT A DAY--
WAIT, OLD FRIEND--
--MY APOLOGIES, I HAVE BEEN BUSY WITH MATTERS OF STATE!
AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE BEEN... RESTRUCTURING HERE IN WAKANDA.
YES... I'D IMAGINE. I KNOW YOU'RE BUSY, T'CHALLA, BUT I'VE GOT A COUPLE OF THINGS--
--ERIK KILLMONGER IS AT AVENGERS MANSION, TRYING TO CLAIM YOUR INACTIVE SLOT--
WHY, I THINK THAT'S A CAPITAL IDEA! KILLMONGER HAS TRULY AND LITERALLY BEEN BORN AGAIN, IRON MAN!
I VOTE YES!
...
...WE'RE REALLY NOT PREPARED TO PUT IT TO A VOTE YET, T'CHALLA...
YES, OF COURSE. WHATEVER. AND THE OTHER THING...?
OH, THOSE OUTSTANDING SHARES IN WDG--
--I WANTED TO REASSURE YOU, I ASSUMED THEM MAINLY AS A CUSTODIAL MATTER-- WE CERTAINLY DON'T INTEND--
KEEP 'EM.
--EXCUSE ME--?
BY U.S. LAW, THOSE SHARES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE IN AMERICAN HANDS, YES--?
I BELIEVE THAT IS THE LAW, YES, BUT--
SO WHY BOTHER ME WITH THIS? I'M A KING, AREN'T I--?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND--
I'M BUSY, SHELL-HEAD! I HAVE KING STUFF TO DO!
I MUST GO! DON'T CALL US, WE'LL CALL--
--ACTUALLY, JUST DON'T CALL US. BYE-BYE. -BLEEP!-
--?!

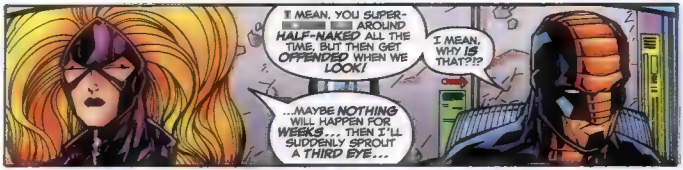
YES, MASTER IRON MAN?
JARVIS-- I NEED TO SPEAK TO JAN.
JUST HAD THE STRANGEST CONVERSATION T' CHALLA--
I'M AFRAID MS. VAN DYNE IS OTHERWISE PREOCCUPIED...
Back at the ranch, all HECK had broken out.
As long-underwear types often do, the (reflexively gags) "heroes" decided the best way to find their missing teammate was to start a BIG FIGHT.
Now, from what I understand, Deadpool was pretty strong and pretty QUICK, but all he REALLY had going for him was a RAPID HEALING FACTOR--
--RUTHLESSNESS, and, of course, his INSANITY.
Which paired him up nicely with KILLMONGER...
WHAT THE BLAZES IS WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?!
LET'S KILL HIM!!
SSKKEEOWWW!
YES, KILLMONGER, AND WE CAN HARDLY FIND TRIATHLON IF YOU INCINERATE DEADPOOL, RIGHT?
TO HADES WITH TRIATHLON-- I WANT MY CAT!!
--?!? "RIGHTFUL"--?! YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY BELIEVE THAT--!
SORRY, WHISKAS-- THE KITTY'S BEEN RE-POSSESSED BY ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER!
HEY... I'M A MERC.
"TRUTH" IS RELATIVE. "TRUTH" IS A COUSIN.
A THIRD COUSIN ONCE REMOVED WHO MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE MARRIED YOUR SISTER.


THAT'S MY MOTTO, ALL RIGHT-- SPEAK SOFTLY (TO YOURSELF) AND CARRY A BIG PLASMA RIFLE!!
SAY-- WHERE ARE THE ORIGINAL GUYS-- THE THOR-CAP DIVISION?
AND ALL THOSE SO-CALLED "INACTIVES"-- GILGAMESH, SERSI ... OOH, WHATTA BABE.


I'M NOT LETTING GO OF THIS "FLAW" THING.
I'M ON TO SOMETHING-- AND YOU KNOW IT.
...TOXIN...
...PROBABLY A RASH... OR, GOD, SOME HORRIBLE INFECTION...

NOW, NORMALLY, FIGHTING THE AVENGERS ALL BY MY LONESOME WOULD GIVE ME PAUSE.
LUCKILY, I'VE CONVINCED MYSELF NONE OF THIS IS ACTUALLY HAPPENING!
BET IF I WUZ THE MOLE MAN YOU'D BE CALLING EVERYBODY!
AFTER ALL, I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU NAKED.
WHICH I REALLY FEEL IS UNFAIR, BY THE WAY.
...HIVES... OR MAYBE I'LL TURN OLD...

DEAD! POOL! SHUT! UP!


I MEAN, YOU SUPER- [redacted] AROUND HALF-NAKED ALL THE TIME, BUT THEN GET OFFENDED WHEN WE LOOK!
I MEAN, WHY IS THAT?!?
...MAYBE NOTHING WILL HAPPEN FOR WEEKS... THEN I'LL SUDDENLY SPROUT A THIRD EYE...

YOU OF ALL PEOPLE OUGHT TO KNOW WHAT I MEAN, SHULKIE!
THE NAME IS JENNIFER, AND WHY?
WHY ARE YOU NAMED JENNIFER?
COULD IT BEEEEE "JENNIFER" IS GREEK FOR "LARGE GREEN BROAD"?
WHY... YOU...
Uh... DEADPOOL...?
THOOM!!

SSKKEEEEZZOOWWW!!
WHAT THE BLAZES--?!
THOOMM!!
WELL, NOW-- THIS IS NEW!!
CLINT BARTON BACK IN THE OLD GIANT-MAN TOGS--?!
WRONG MAN, THUNDRA-- IT'S TITANIA!!
--AND WRONG NAME, IT'S GOLIATH.
YEAH, WELL, NOW THAT EVERYBODY'S BEEN INTRODUCED--
--WHAT SAY WE GET DOWN TO THE BUTT-KICKING--?
MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY--

BULLPEN BULLETINS

AVAILABLE AUGUST 2ND

CONAN: THE FLAME AND THE [illegible] — $3

It's the sword-swinging conclusion [illegible] the mighty Cimmerian's battle with the sinister sorcerer [illegible] Kulan Gath! By Roy Thomas and Geoff Isherwood!

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Scattered throughout space [illegible], the Fantastic Four [illegible] to [illegible] the Earth from the residents of Revelation! By John Francis Moore and Salvador Larroca!

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The kids rocket off into space with their new ally... a Snark?! By S.C. Bury [illegible] Colleen Doran!

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THOR — $28

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When push comes [illegible] shove, it's X-Men vs. X-Men! By Chris Claremont and Tom Raney!

X-MEN: THE HIDDEN YEARS — $11

Professor [illegible] the Beast search for a mutant, only [illegible] find [illegible] extraordinary young girl — and her loyal Sentinel! By John Byrne!

SPOTLIGHT

UNCANNY X-MEN #385

Storms and the "Revelation" shook up the mutant world, the [illegible] separate X-Men teams are finally coming together. But as their (last) luck would have it, they're not meeting as allies! You see, **Gambit** cuts a deal with the space-faring **Red Pirates** to free some of his teammates who have been kidnapped by the space-spanning slavers. But to assure their freedom, Gambit's squad has to help the Pirates collect their human prey! Can the ragin' Cajun and the team pull off this con long enough to save thousands? And what will the other group — led by Gambit's ex-love **Regea** — do when they discover the deal? It's a dangerous game — one which quickly pits X-Man against X-Man!

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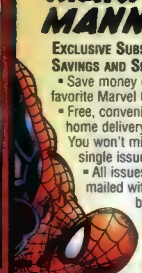

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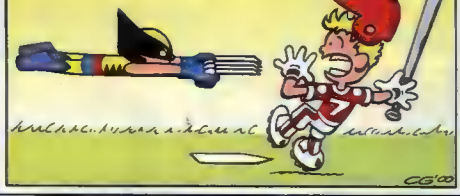
BULLPEN BITS #51

BY CHRIS GIARRUSSO



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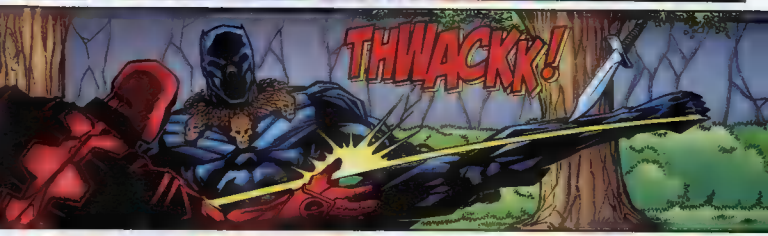
--GIVE ME BACK MY CAT.
PREY IS MUCH MORE THAN JUST A PET TO ME, YOU KNOW.
HE'S MY FRIEND. THE ONLY ONE I HAVE. I'D DIE FOR HIM.
AND YOU MAY, TOO.
KAAAPP!
--ALLOW ME TO LEAVE MY CARD!!
BEEN AWHILE SINCE I RASSLED WITH A 7-FOOT SOUL BROTHER DRESSED LIKE A KITTY!
I'VE READ ABOUT YOU, DEADPOOL--
--PEOPLE SAY YOU'RE INSANE!
HOW POETIC.
HATE TO BREAK IT TO YOU, PAL, BUT I'M JUST IN THIS FOR THE HAND-PUPPET.
YOU NEED TO TAKE ALL THAT OTHER CRAP UP WITH MY CLIENT!
IN THE MEANTIME, THOUGH--
EVERYBODY'S INSANE. BUT ONLY SOME OF US ARE GOOD AT IT, KILROY--
KILLMONGER!
WHATEVER.
I HAD FRIENDS ONCE... IT DIDN'T WORK OUT.
NOW I LIVE WITH TWO PEOPLE WHO'D KILL ME FOR A SACK OF GUMMY BEARS! AND, IN AN ODD WAY, Y'KNOW-- IT'S WORKING.
A WARPED PERVERSION OF FRIENDSHIP IS ABOUT ALL I'M CAPABLE OF THESE DAYS, I GUESS!
SO-- HOW ABOUT IT-- WANNA MOVE IN?!

C'MON, FRANK. IT'S EXIT TIME.
BUT... BUT WE'RE WINNING...
NO. WE'RE JUST NOT LOSING YET.

THERE'S A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WINNING AND NOT LOSING.
OUR JOB WAS TO DISTRACT THE AVENGERS SO DEADPOOL COULD ESCAPE.
HE WANTS TO GET ALL CAUGHT UP FIGHTING BLACK PANTHER-- THAT'S HIS PROBLEM!


THWACKK!

--WAIT--
--OH, MAN-- THAT WAS A COOL MOVE. THAT MOVE WAS UNBELIEVABLE.
LIKE IT? I PICKED IT UP IN MALAYSIA--

NOW, SEE, USUALLY, WHEN YOU DO A REVERSE LIKE SO, YOUR CENTER IS, SAY, HERE, AND--
YES... YES, I SEE THAT... BUT, WATCH WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU SHIFT BACK A LITTLE--

GIRLS-- IF YOU DON'T MIND--!!
SSZZAAACKK!

--THE PARTY'S OVER!
LET'S BEAT IT, WADE--
--BEFORE THE BEATING STARTS!!
CRIPES, FRANK-- CAN'T YOU TURN THAT BLASTED MUSIC OFF?!
GEEZ-- THINK THE COPS COULD, OH, FOLLOW THAT RACKET--?!
IT'S JAMMED--
--ACHEBE RIGGED IT SOMEHOW--!!
WHERE IS THAT LOON, ANYWAY--?!
THE POT INQUIRED OF THE KETTLE...
...ACHEBE'S GONE. WHERE'D YOU SET YOUR TRANSPORTER TO TAKE THE LEOPARD?
THE DEADLOUNGE--
THEY'RE NOT THERE. REMOTE SENSORS COME UP NEGATIVE!
ACHEBE MAY HAVE SOMEHOW REDIRECTED THE TRANSPORT TRANSMISSION--
CRIPES. ALL THIS HEADACHE, AND ALL I GET IS A STUPID HAND-PUPPET--?!
ACTUALLY--

--YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE THAT.
GOODNIGHT, FOLKS.
SKEEEOW! SKEEEOW!
CRIPES, I HATE WADE...
S-KREEEEEEECH!!
THOOM!
JARVIS! WHAT'S OUR STATUS?
TRIATHLON'S STILL MISSING, SIR-- BUT THE MANSION'S SENSOR ARRAY HAS BEEN ABLE TO DISCERN A POSSIBLE TRANSPORT LOCATION--
"--WAKANDA!"
MY LORD...
...TRANSPORT SIGNATURE PROXIMITY WARNING ON MY SECURITY GRID!
AND WE ARE RECEIVING ANOTHER PRIORITY ALERT FROM THE AVENGERS.
IGNORE THEM BOTH, TAKU.
GET SOME REST, OLD FRIEND. FOR, COME THE DAWN--
--THE TRUE BATTLE BEGINS...
NEXT: CONTINUED IN BLACK PANTHER #23! ON SALE IN 2 SHORT WEEKS!
AND GET BACK HERE NEXT ISSUE FOR THE SECRET OF TITANIA'S SECRET! THOM CRUZ'S LAST STAND! MORE USELESS CONVERSATION! AND WHATEVER ELSE WE CAN THINK UP!!

DEADPOOL

As most of you probably already realize, this issue of DEADPOOL is Part One of a crossover between DEADPOOL and BLACK PANTHER called "CAT TRAP". We here at Marvel have taken to calling it our little PRIEST FEAST. It's catchy and we like it so we thought we'd pass it on to you fans out there. Also, be aware that BLACK PANTHER #23, the second part of this crossover, will be coming to a comic shop near you in the next few weeks, so if you don't see it yet, don't panic! You'll be getting your hands on the second chapter soon. Until then, feast (there's that word again) your eyes on the letters page! Not quite as exciting as CAT TRAP part two, but entertaining nonetheless!

Hey people!

From cover to finish, this was yet another laugh riot! I'm still not getting all of those cultural references, I really must bone up on my Americana, but the ones I do get have me in stitches!

Rarely do we get to see villains "at home", doing "regular stuff", and for that alone I thank Mr. Priest for having Pool share accommodations with Frank 'n' Skeeter. It's these glimpses into the lives of our favorite heroes that make them seem more real to us, helping us to identify with them more.

Now, I'm not so sure we should be identifying too closely with the bad guys, but then again, I guess those of a criminal bent need positive role models too, right?

With hints of Weasel's return, can Al be far behind? Or Zoe and Monty for that matter? As fun as this interlude has been, I can't wait to see Wade's regular supporting cast once again and the take that Priest will have on them. Any chance that the German chick might be returning any time soon? Heffa Lumpp, was it?

As to the whole "Should Deadpool return to his mercenary roots?" debate, I would have to ask whether he ever truly left them? Sure, Wade's trying to do the right thing, but he still has a ways to go, and his past is bound to come back and haunt him from time to time, presenting him with tough choices.

Perhaps another good question might be "Should the tone of this book be light and witty or dark and gritty?" For me, anyway, a blend of the two works just fine. The darker episodes have been most compelling and insightful, but 'Pool wouldn't be 'Pool without his own brand of zaniness!

I still say that seeing Wade, Elektra and Typhoid, with maybe Logan thrown into the mix for good measure, functioning as a kind of self-help group for the mentally, emotionally and spiritually wounded would make for some riveting story lines; truly ground-breaking stuff.

But wherever you decide to take this title, be sure that I'll be along for the ride. I'm especially looking forward to the crossover with BLACK PANTHER! Take care now, people!

Paul Slattery
(Address withheld by request)

You bring up a lot of interesting points, Paul. These are all questions we should be pondering day in and day out! Should he continue on his zany path or change to a more gritty tone? We agree with you and hope for a combination of the two. Has Deadpool left his mercenary roots? Check out issue #45 of DEADPOOL for the answer to that question. That issue begins a new chapter in Deadpool's life as Jimmy Palmiotti and comic legend Paul Chadwick take the reins for a three-issue storyline. It's become obvious that Deadpool is a mercenary with a heart of gold, if everyone can forgive us at Marvel an old cliché, but will that last? Stay tuned.

Mr. Priest has done a nice job making DEADPOOL as zany as it's ever been. Check out next issue to find out exactly what's been going on in this book since Priest took over the title back in DEADPOOL #34. If it's anything like the last 10 issues, expect the unexpected to continue!

As for Blind Al, Weasel and other supporting characters who have been missing in this book, have patience! Some day they will return and you'll be the first to know about it!

No plans for the return of Typhoid Mary or Elektra in these pages, but if it's Wolverine and Deadpool you're looking for, then we have a treat for you. Rob Liefeld will be delivering a two-issue helping of Deadpool in WOVERINE #s 154 and 155. Rob not only writes the issues, but he draws them as well. Think of it as Deadpool returning to his roots courtesy of one of his original creators.

Dear Priest,

I just wanted to thank you for helping shed light on a very profound issue — the absence of Star Wars DVDs. You have boldly used your media clout to challenge George "I bet they'll buy it eight times if I keep re-releasing it" Lucas. By doing this, you have brought attention to all of the DVDs that are missing. If it says Lucas or Spielberg, don't count on finding it at your DVD retailer. It takes a lot of guts to challenge the most powerful men in the entertainment industry. I commend you for standing up to the man. If Star Wars is released, I am sure that it is you who deserves the credit. Thanks again.

Oh yeah, the writing and art and stuff were really good.

Ezra Gallo
Auburn, AL

We're glad you appreciate the valiant crusade Mr. Priest is waging against the world, Ezra. Once again, Christopher boldly takes this book where no book has gone before ... DVD retail. (And yes we know the boldly stuff is from that other "Star" movie, but we had to try to be clever!) Will there be repercussions for this act? Come to mention it, we haven't heard from Priest in a couple of weeks now. As for the book itself, we like it a lot, too!

Dear Priest and the gang,

Deadpool's the one character I love to root against. I love it when he gets frustrated. It's too bad the pirate ship blew up in DEADPOOL #41! Hahahahahaha.

And on a different note, keep Constrictor and Titania around for awhile. Anyway, here's hoping Dirty Wolff can frustrate Deadpool some more!

Brendan Walsh
Sputnik3000@aol.com

Short, sweet and to the point, Brendan, just like we like it. Constrictor and Titania run into some hard times over in BLACK PANTHER #23, but you'll see the aftermath of that next issue in DEADPOOL #45. Don't say we didn't warn you!

And as for Dirty Wolff ... what can we really say? It looks as if Wade got the last laugh on him.

Dear Poolheads,

DEADPOOL is awesome! Priest is doing an awesome job! The artwork is fantastic! Keep it up!

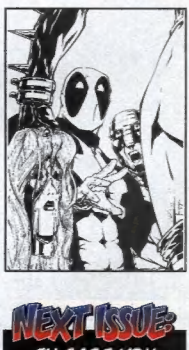
What's the deal with the same group of people getting their letters published all the time? Are they fakes or do they just send a lot of letters? It took me 38 issues to write a letter. Make Mine DEADPOOL!

Doug Conner
Moundsville, WV

Your first letter was well worth the wait, Doug! And as you can see we do print other people's letters sometimes. (Of course, most of you will think this could be a trick to fool all of you people who think the letters are fake. We can't win ...) Next time don't wait so long to write us.

And on that note we end another month of DEADLINES with a shot at next issue's cover. Who's holding Titania's face, you ask?! You'll have to wait and see!

Now let's head off into the sunset together towards the Next Issue box.



NEXT ISSUE:

IN CASE YOU MISSED THE MEMO, CHECK OUT BLACK PANTHER #23 FOR THE CONCLUSION TO CAT TRAP! THEN IN DEADPOOL #45, THE CAT'S OUT OF THE BAG ... FIND OUT WHO TITANIA REALLY IS!

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NOW, NORMALLY, FIGHTING THE *AVENGERS* ALL BY MY *LONESOME* WOULD GIVE ME *PAUSE*.

LUCKILY, I'VE CONVINCED MYSELF *NONE* OF THIS IS *ACTUALLY HAPPENING!*

THAT'S MY *MOTTO*, ALL RIGHT-- SPEAK SOFTLY (TO YOURSELF) AND CARRY A BIG *PLASMA RIFLE!!*

SAY-- WHERE ARE THE *ORIGINAL* GUYS-- THE *THOR-CAP DIVISION?*

AND ALL THOSE SO-CALLED "INACTIVES"-- GILGAMESH, SERSI ... OOH, WHATTA BABE.

BET IF I WUZ THE *MOLE MAN* YOU'D BE CALLING *EVERYBODY!*

I'M NOT LETTING GO OF THIS *"MAN"* THING.

I'M ON TO SOMETHING-- AND *YOU KNOW* IT.

...TOXIN...

...PROBABLY A *RASH*... OR, GOD, SOME HORRIBLE INFECTION...

AFTER ALL, I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU *NAKED*.

WHICH I REALLY FEEL IS *UNFAIR*, BY THE WAY.

...HIVES... OR MAYBE I'LL TURN *OLD*...